

Effective EIB Training

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The intent of the Expert Infantryman's Badge (EIB) is to enhance the morale and prestige of infantrymen who perform a tough and thankless job daily, gaining and maintaining the skills they will need on the battlefield. The badge is not meant to denigrate the skills and importance of the other vital and critical branches and specialties of the Army, but it is a symbol that infantrymen play a vital role in the defense of the nation and will do so in the future.

Although testing procedures have changed significantly over the years, it seems the results are usually about the same—roughly 10 percent of candidates qualify for the badge, while some units' success rates vary from 20 to 70 percent on the EIB test. I would like to offer some proven techniques that may help your unit improve its EIB success rate.

Site Selection. Not many units get to select the site of their EIB tests, but for those that do the following advice may

help: The site needs to be close enough that transportation (or the lack of it) doesn't cut into training time. Ideally, units should be able to march to the site, but not at the expense of normal daily routines such as personal hygiene, barracks maintenance, meals, and physical training. The site should also be far enough away that soldiers cannot be distracted by home, the post exchange, fellow soldiers, or others who may drive by.

The sequence of test stations is left to the discretion of the EIB board. Units are told before beginning training which tasks they will test and train on which day, as shown on the matrix. This method allows a unit to focus its training effort each day on selected tasks. The sequence permits a unit to conclude testing in four days, but it allows for five days for soldiers who miss testing for various reasons (sick call or injury). (The regulation says testing must be done in five days.)

Scorer Preparation. Except for preparing the soldiers, there is no more important task than selecting and training the scorers and NCOICs. When tasked for NCOs or soldiers to support the EIB, send your very best. Scorers must be of the highest caliber, absolutely honest and fair, and able to work under pressure (such as the kind a private first class feels when he has to tell a staff sergeant or a captain that he's a NO-GO).

According to USAIC Pamphlet 350-6, *The EIB Test*, scorers must prepare themselves for the administration of the test through a training phase, a rehearsal phase, and a certification phase. In my experience, three weeks (one per phase) is about right to prepare

for and execute the test. Throughout the preparation and execution portions of the test, scorers must be exempt from duties that would prevent their full participation. Failure to do so usually results in poorly trained or uninformed scorers who may incorrectly score a candidate, and affect the credibility of scoring.

The training phase requires that each scorer learn and master the tasks he will grade. It is not enough to have subject-matter experts grading each station. They must be fully capable of performing the task to standard, as well as properly administering and evaluating the same task. Many SMEs are very good at what they do, but don't necessarily disassemble an M16 according to established standards. They sometimes use shortcuts, bypass steps, or add techniques of their own. Although every station should be manned with SMEs, their preparation and competence must not be taken for granted.

It is during the preparation that the scorers ready their stations for the test. I've found that the best way to do this is to allow the individual stations to prepare according to their own wishes and ingenuity. Give them some guidance and then stand back. What should you

look for? Clean lanes, free of debris; camouflage netting; laminated instructions; and polished and starched graders, always quietly professional. The site must also be free of distractions. There should be no soda cans, coolers, radios, loud talking or laughing. While some of these items seem harmless enough, when the training and testing begins, the site should be professional, not only in appearance but in execution.

The rehearsal phase is next. During this phase, scorers take turns testing and critiquing each other. It is during this phase that EIB board members must be present—when standards are checked and reinforced and when the board certifies the scorers and NCOICs. Scorers should administer practice tests to each other, just as though it were test day. Reading the instructions verbatim is not just a requirement—it makes sense. If the task, conditions, and standards are read from the Instructions to Candidates each time, every soldier will hear the same thing the same way. You cannot tolerate joking or clowning on the site. You train the way you fight, and you practice the way you test. During practice exams, board members and examinees must challenge the scorers by asking questions or performing steps

| Battalion EIB Training Matrix | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
| Train | Site preparation | Site preparation | Scorer practice | Scorer practice | Scorer practice |
| Rehearse | 0900 B - Black C - RED Gold open 1300 A - Land Nav | 0900 A - Black C - Gold Red open 1300 B - Land Nav | 0900 A - Gold B - Red Black open 1300 C - Land Nav | 0900 C - Black B - Gold A - Red 1300 Land Nav open | 0900 Open site |
| Certify | 0900 B - Black C - Red Gold open 1300 A - Land Nav | 0900 A - Black C - Gold Red open 1300 B - Land Nav | 0900 A - Gold B - Red Black open 1300 C - Land Nav | 0900 C - Black B - Gold A - Red 1300 Land Nav open | 0900 Open Site |
| Test | 0530 APFT (All) 0900 B - Black C - Red Gold open 1300 A - Land Nav | 0500 B - Road March 0530 APFT Retest 0900 A - Black C - Gold Red open 1300 B - Land Nav | 0500 C - Road March 0900 A - Gold B - Red Black open 1300 C - Land Nav | 0500 A - Road March 0900 C - Black B - Gold A - Red 1300 Land Nav Retest | 0600 Road March Retest 0900 Open Retest 1500 Awards Ceremony |
| | Black Lane | Gold Lane | Red Lane | | |
| | C - First Aid | G - Camouflage | J - M16A2 | | |
| | D - NBC | H - Commo | K - Hand grenades | | |
| | F - Indirect fire | M - Salute | L - Mines | | |
| | I - Map reading | R - .50 cal M2 | O - M136 | | |
| | | | Q - M249 | | |

incorrectly. At the conclusion of the test, critique each scorer.

The EIB board is responsible for certifying that each NCOIC and scorer is fully capable of performing and scoring his assigned tasks. Certification may occur before, during, or after the rehearsal phase, but during the rehearsal is best. If it is done before, you are likely to waste time teaching scorers their duties. If done after, you may not catch mistakes or problems early enough. During the rehearsal phase, you will be able to certify quickly those stations that are on target, and still have time to work with those who are having difficulty.

What should the board look for during the certification phase? Is the test site clearly marked? Are stations easily located? Where are the pre-test, post-test, and retest holding areas for each station? What can candidates or leaders do at each holding area? Is each station set up according to the instructions? Where are the water points? Mess area? Visitor parking? Control tent? Are there enough back-up training aids? Are all scorers certified and present? Does the test site present a professional appearance? Do scorers read verbatim the task, conditions, and standards to each examinee, using the same words and tone? Do scorers carefully observe each action? Is grading done to established standards, and without scorer interpretation or personal preference? Do scorers return each piece of equipment and the test site to the stated condition at the conclusion of each test? What are the procedures for candidates to follow to protest a decision? What about hearing with protective measures at the stations with weapons firing?

Once the scorers and NCOICs become certified, the board must ensure that the test remains consistent until completion. There is a tendency for conditions and/or standards to drift or change as time goes by. Each NCOIC and board member must be alert for these changes and stop them immediately. The purpose of certification is to ensure that graders test to establish standards, not to close approximations. The last candidate must receive the exact same test as the first.

Unit Preparation. Throughout the year, leaders can easily incorporate EIB task training into their schedules. Opportunity training (at ranges, while awaiting transportation, at formations) is highly effective for general preparation. As the test draws nearer, you must formalize your training and preparation, and incorporate EIB tasks into individual and collective training programs. If a unit earns few EIBs, there is likely to be a clear correlation to its lack of thorough training to standards and detailed preparation.

Again, don't train at the expense of daily routine duties. I have observed units that train from before dawn until after dark but with only marginal success. It is possible to overtrain soldiers and leave them so exhausted from preparation that they fail during testing. I don't advocate any weekend or evening training either. The normal duty day is enough, particularly if a unit is really making the most of its training.

Battle-focused training doctrine requires that squad leaders train their soldiers, but I still see units conducting "round-robin" training. The benefits of leaders training soldiers are obvious—squads train as teams, leaders earn more trust and respect from their soldiers, and the method builds cohesion. Besides that, whom will soldiers call upon for help in battle—the "resident experts" from Station #1, or their squad leaders? Additionally, by making leaders train their soldiers, we can easily measure leaders' ability to conduct training on the basic infantry and soldier skills tested during the EIB tests.

Assign every candidate to a squad leader for training. This includes platoon leaders, platoon sergeants, and staff officers. Assign headquarters soldiers (armorers, clerks) to squads as well. They can't train themselves.

As stated in USAIC Pamphlet 350-6, to achieve the best results, unit trainers should participate in the scorer's training to assist in preparing their soldiers for the test. Having the squad leaders present during scorer training and, more important, during certification enhances your prospects of earning EIBs. They'll be right there to see exactly how the test is run and can clarify any questions

about expected performance measures or standards. As in the earlier discussion about SMEs, squad leaders are SMEs, but they all have their own ways of doing things.

Soldier Preparation. Cool, calm, collected, and confident. That's how your soldiers need to be for the test, not rattled and pressured. I remember one of my squad leaders who failed the grenade task several years running. As he was sweating it out at his last station the year he earned the badge (with no NO-GOs), the commanding general walked up to him and said, in a loud voice, "Why so worried, Sergeant? This is the easiest station on the test!" You must begin instilling confidence and concentration under pressure long before test day. The soldiers must, in fact, be taught and developed every day.

Since we learn best when we execute hands-on performance tasks, practice, practice, and practice! Make your soldiers perform the tasks repeatedly, and encourage them when they fail. Show them how to execute each step properly. Inspect their equipment for proper fit, function, and serviceability.

Testing. At some point, generally during the training phase, have EIB committee members and leaders at all levels with EIBs start wearing the non-subdued badge on their uniforms. The colored metal badge is a readily recognizable symbol of what each candidate is seeking and is also a display of pride in earning so difficult a badge.

I believe every candidate should test at every station, regardless of his status for the badge. Even after a soldier fails to qualify, keeping him in the testing process is smart. This is probably the premier individual training event for the entire year. At no other time will squad leaders have the opportunity to spend two to four weeks of uninterrupted time training their soldiers on these very important combat survival skills. This isn't just about a badge; this is about individual combat skills training.

On the subject of training distractions, the chain of command can be the biggest. Keep them away from test stations. Allow them in the holding areas and routes of march, offering encouragement. But who needs a platoon

one or he's out of the running?

Every leader in the unit should participate in the road march if possible. While it is not a big ruck, or a particularly long walk, the act shows support for your soldiers. It is also a prime example of leading from the front. Sharing hardships is a key indicator of good leadership.

Awards Ceremony. The culminating event of the EIB test is the awards ceremony. I have seen units pin the EIB on at the conclusion of the last test event, but this fails to publicly recognize soldiers for this difficult test. The proper way to present soldiers their badges is in a formal ceremony, with

fellow soldiers, chains of command, and family members in attendance.

The ceremony should be organized and led entirely by NCOs, which also underscores that the NCO is the primary trainer of the Army. The command sergeants major and first sergeants, along with their commanders, should present a token number of EIBs, probably to senior NCOs and officers, but the squad leaders who trained the soldiers should present most of the awards.

While mass awards formations are fast and efficient, I like to separate those soldiers who earned the award with first-time GOs in every task. Put them out in front, and mention their

unique accomplishment. Also appropriate at the ceremony is the presentation of awards to the squad leaders whose results far exceeded expectations.

Make your squad leaders train their soldiers hard, to establish standards, and watch those EIBs come rolling in!

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